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ABSTRACT

A practicum was developed to expand written vocabulary for third graders through training in using a data base and brainstorming strategies. Individual thesauri were written and published to demonstrate the results of collecting vocabulary and applying it to specific topics. Daily process writing became an integral part of the curriculum. Class time became an on-going procedure consisting of reading, writing, editing, author's chair, and rewriting. Brainstorming and computer word bank collecting were developed and linked to all aspects of written expression. Mini lessons in publishing and the use of a thesaurus were demonstrated and published versions of individual thesauri were written and illustrated by all 27 members of the class. Results indicated that all five objectives were reached successfully with results surpassing predictions in some areas. Many unexpected gains with potential long term effects were noted and data from anecdotal journals indicated possibilities for school/district attention. Collected data indicated the following: (1) brainstorming techniques help children organize for writing and are easily taught; (2) children can use a data base for orderly collection of vocabulary; (3) children can write and publish their growing vocabulary studies in an interesting manner; (4) using process writing with the three previously mentioned techniques encouraged all students to expand confidence in their ability to write; and (5) writing became fun when it was supported in an orderly manner where children succeeded. (Five tables of data are included and 52 references are attached. Appendixes include a "bubble web for brainstorming" and a diagram of the thesaurus format.) (Author/MG)

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Expanding Third Graders' Vocabulary Using a Data Base, Individual Thesauri and Brainstorming Strategies

by

Ann Gaffuri

Cluster 36

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A Practicum I Report presented to the
Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

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ABSTRACT

Expanding Third Graders' Vocabulary Using a Data Base, Individual Thesauri and Brainstorming Strategies. Gaffuri, Ann., 1991: Practicum I Report, Nova University, Ed,D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood. Descriptors: Vocabulary Development/Process Writing/Invented Spelling/Language Development/Computers//Computer Banks/Thesauri/Brainstorming/Publishing.

This practicum aimed to expand written vocabulary for third graders through training in using a data base and brainstorming strategies. Individual thesauri were written and published to demonstrate the results of collecting vocabulary and applying it to specific topics.

Daily process writing which gave the third graders time, ownership and response became an integral part of the curriculum. Class time became an on-going procedure consisting of reading, writing, editing, Author's chair and rewriting. Brainstorming and computer bank word collecting were developed and linked to all aspects of written expression. Mini lessons in publishing and the use of a thesaurus were demonstrated. As a result, published versions of individual thesauri were written and illustrated by all members of the class.

Outcomes of this practicum were very positive. All five objectives were reached successfully. In some areas results even surpassed predictions. Many unexpected gains with potential long term effects were noted and the data from the anecdotal journals kept by the facilitator and this writer indicates possibilities for school/district attention. The data from this practicum strongly indicates the following: (a) brainstorming techniques help children organize for writing and can be easily taught, (b) children can use a data base for orderly collection of vocabulary, (c) children can write and publish their growing vocabulary studies in an interesting manner, (d) using process writing with the three previously mentioned techniques encouraged all the children to expand confidence in their ability to write and (e) writing became fun when it was supported in an orderly manner where children succeeded.

PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

Verifier: Mary Sullivan

Mary Sullivan

Principal, Paul A. Dever School

Title

Boston, Massachusetts

March 1, 1991

Date

This practicum report was submitted by Ann Gaffuri under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D Program in Early and Middle Childhood and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova University.

Approved:

Wm. W. Anderson

Date of Final Approval of Report

William W. Anderson, Ph.D.,
Adviser

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....iii

TABLE OF CONTENTS..... iv

LIST OF TABLES..... v

ABSTRACT..... vi

Chapter

I INTRODUCTION..... 1

Description of Work Setting and Community.... 1
Writer's Work Setting and Role..... 2

II STUDY OF THE PROBLEM..... 5

Problem Description..... 5
Problem Documentation..... 8
Causitive Analysis..... 10
Relationship ofthe Problem to the Literature. 12

III ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS.. 18

Goals and Expectations..... 18
Performance Objectives..... 19
Measurement of Objectives..... 20
Mechanism for Recording Unexpected Results... 21
Description of Plans for Analyzing Results... 22

IV SOLUTION STRATEGY..... 24

Discussion and Evaluation of Possible Solutions..... 24
Description and Justification for Solution Selected..... 27
Report of Action Taken..... 29
Deviations..... 34

V RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS 35

Results..... 35
Discussion..... 39
Recommendations..... 42
Dissemination..... 42

REFERENCES..... 43

Appendicee Page

A BUBBLE WEB FOR BRAINSTORMIMG..... 50

B THESAURUS FORMAT..... 51

LIST OF TABLES

Table

1 Childrens' Use of Bubble-webbed Brainstorm Forms..... 36

2 Computer Bank Word Collection..... 37

3 Using 3-6 Distinctive words in Each Piece..... 37

4 Individual Thesauri..... 38

5 Nouns and Adjectives..... 39

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of the Work Setting and Community

A third grade classroom in a large urban school system in the Northeast was the setting for this practicum. The school population reflected an inner city neighborhood which was 85 % black, 10 % Hispanic and 5 % white. Architecturally, the school is an open space building housing one thousand plus students in five "great areas" ranging in age from Early Childhood three-year-olds to grade five students. It is also a community building open in one way or another from nine in the morning until ten o'clock at night.

The school system has a population of approximately 52,000 pupils down from its high of 96,000 ten years ago. It has 156 elementary buildings, 12 middle school settings and nine high schools or vocational combinations. The city is old, debt-ridden and has extremely heavy costs in regard to bilingual and busing considerations. Unfortunately, many of the tax-paying city residents do not have school age children and the system has rapidly become one of poverty and transience.

Eighteen years ago when this innovative setting first opened, the staff applied for positions, were trained in team functioning and enjoyed multiple staff development

experiences. Only 5% of this staff remained and the replacement staff has not had specific training and did not elect to come to this building.

Even with busing in full force, parents in this community opted to continue to send their children to this school because of its proximity and the fact that 92% of them work and must rely on immediate solutions for childcare. The need to provide the best education for these children is somewhat blunted due to this overpowering necessity factor.

Eighty per cent of the children started school in this building and an additional ten percent were in the school during the entire previous year. They receive support services from a Title I Reading program, a "Literature is Tops" program, and five special education resource rooms.

The school system is old, respected and fallen on hard times. In the past, it had led the nation, been the center of innovation, and served as a cultural beacon of thought, process and practice. Tradition was sacred, yet challengeable; practice was embedded, yet changeable, and outlets for higher education surrounded this system, yet had not suffocated it. This system still has much to offer its students, staff, and the city; it only needs the momentum to change and the redirection of its finances and leadership.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

The writer is a classroom teacher of twenty-six years who has background as a reading and language coordinator and

assistant principal. The facilitator is a classroom teacher of twenty years experience whose background is heavily concentrated in mathematics, computer innovation and thematic education. These two teachers have worked together in partnership and have developed classroom-grant-sharing positions for the last fourteen years. Children coming to the third grade practicum setting were introduced to process writing from the first day of school. A well-stocked center existed in the classroom, writing took place daily and folders, drafts and opportunities for sharing and publishing were on-going events. Children chose their own topics and materials, audiences were sought and changed frequently and displays and cross grade exchanges happened on a four to six week basis.

This class of twenty-seven children is one of six third grades in the building and is self-contained except for special subject areas which include art, music, physical education, science, library, and computer. Elementary curriculum areas include but are not limited to a reading (HBJ)/language arts block, a mathematics block, a social studies block whose focus is the city, and a science block. Any integration and/or thematic development of these areas was highly encouraged.

The writer was responsible for the integration of the practicum material into the reading/language arts block of the existing curriculum, all procedural matters dealing with supplies, equipment and materials and the publishing and

distribution of all of the childrens' writing. In addition, the writer was responsible for the on-going communication with the facilitator so that introduction and interventions would move forward smoothly.

The facilitator was responsible for the vocabulary expander model as it was introduced to the children in the classroom as part of process writing. She was directly responsible for teaching brainstorming techniques, developing a computer bank and providing time for writing and publishing individual thesauri.

Six additional computer stations were introduced into this classroom one week after this program began. Not only did these additional computers facilitate interest but they greatly increased accessibility both for initial teaching of computer operations and initiation of the computer bank approach to the model.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

Simply stated, the problem was that the written vocabulary of third graders was redundant and often boring. It relied on the use of ordinary commonplace words which did not enhance or "color" the story line chosen. There was little attempt made to use new, unique, different sounding or even alternate vocabulary taken from reading, speaking or general daily life. These "words of distinction" would have added flavor and an individual touch to some pretty basic writing encountered at this level. Phrases and sayings were virtually unheard of let alone used; thus, "the early bird catches the worm, a stitch in time saves nine, or feeling under the weather" would soon drop away altogether from the active vocabulary of a generation. In addition, such usage and the connection of vocabulary from reading and speaking to writing was usually not in evidence although it would have enhanced all three areas.

Children in this third grade class were not the top performers in the school although it was also not designated as academically problem clustered. Twelve of the twenty-six children had been retained at least once and two had been retained twice. Two more were recent immigrants who spoke little or no English but whose parents had chosen regular rather than bilingual placement.

If the problem were solved there would be an organized plan for language acquisition and practice and usage in both its written and spoken forms. An emphasis would be placed on teacher training and strategy development. And, "playing with words" would be a respectable work procedure for all levels of schooling. For vocabulary development in particular, it would be necessary to help children to continually explore multiple ways of expressing themselves. This would certainly include an extensive development of generic and specific word knowledge and vast exposure to written works of all kinds where words of color, excitement, and emotion could be heard and seen in action. Surrounding children with intriguing words in spoken exchanges would be explored more fully as using only the known can be devastating and do nothing to enhance a child's sense of curiosity, diversity or thinking.

Children had to reach through attainable space to get meaning and word pictures. They had to do this often in order to replicate it themselves. They needed to hear and see different words, say and touch them often, use them gingerly at first and then finally with growing confidence if they were to make them their own. Word "testing and "tasting" must be an acceptable part of growth in language. It must be encouraged even when the testing results in some bizarre constructions or funny situations as it is the basic laboratory for interesting word choice. As such, it should be lauded often, edited and explained when necessary and

applauded when it clarifies ideas for the reader. This is the workjob of vocabulary and language.

The children in the system were taught writing in a variety of ways ranging from some few process writing classrooms, incidentally as part of the basal series (HBJ), with independent trade materials, or for the occassion be it holiday or newspaper/display. Though the system mandated the expected product of writing instruction, it had no systematic plan for its accomplishment. Likewise whole language was a buzz word and whole language classrooms were celebrated. The connection with development, speech, reading, cognition, listening and writing was just barely indicated. A mandatory basal series was instituted one year ago with its complete testing program, workbook and an enrichment program for those less able.

At this level, writing in its entirety was incidental unless a teacher had a particular feeling for it or for its place in literacy education. Where there had been some improvement in the system, it had mainly been in the area of using whole language in order to emphasize speaking, listening and independent reading. Most aspects of a detailed language program including vocabulary development over time had been deemed to be too hard for these inner city children who came without early family supports for literacy. The teachers covered the basics, forgetting that the exchange of ideas through the medium of the spoken and

written word would open new spirals of understanding in all areas.

It was easily understood why the written vocabulary of many third grade students was limited almost exclusively to high frequency words. A de facto case was made which showed the lack of exposure to excellent language strategies in general and vocabulary development in particular. Those strategies would have alleviated basic causes and encouraged the acquisition of interesting vocabulary and eventually expanded knowledge and performance in this area.

Problem Documentation

Classroom teachers did not use specific vocabulary development strategies; indeed, in many instances they needed staff development in order to do so. Prior to staff development the system - or each of the five major districts which comprise it - must decide how they will handle this lack of preparedness. To date, they have each introduced overview presentations on a voluntary basis with no additonal support and no follow up in the form of money, time or personnel.

Interviews with third grade teachers indicated that four of the six teachers polled were concerned with the overuse of certain baseline or easily spelled vocabulary in their childrens' writings. And these teachers did teach writing regularly in a variety of the ways indicated.

The state basic skills test in writing given each year to third graders in October indicated a 72% usage of high frequency vocabulary across the grade with little use of words of distinction (new, unique, interesting, unknown, provocative or special sounding). It is important to note that in a contiguous affluent city where process writing was a mandated program, vocabulary usage was deemed "interesting and provocative" for the same test prompt. This indicated the value of the process and/or any aspect of the former such as vocabulary exposure and usage.

Starting in March, 1990 data was collected by means of an interview for the following general categories of independent action:

Who reads?.....6 out of 12 boys and 9 out of 15 girls chose to read when they had free time both at home and at school. Twelve children indicated that they sneak reading at night in bed and in school at least once a day.

Who writes?....3 out of 12 boys and 7 out of 15 girls write to friends, to fantasy and television characters and in a diary.

Who uses dictionaries?..2 of 27 children in the class indicated they used a dictionary without being told to do so. The others said they could never find things and it took too long.

Who uses the computer?..19 Of 27 boys and girls loved the computer for all kinds of things from games, to skill packs to independent writing and Logo.

Who makes a book?.....16 of 27 children in the class said they had been making books or collections of some sort since first grade and always had ideas to share in this way.

Who collects, writes down, looks up, or asks about new, different or unknown words (words of distinction)?..6 of the 27 children kept notebooks or jotted "interesting" words down when they read or heard them. Three others said they tried to remember this kind of word but often forgot because they were paying attention to the content of the piece they were working on.

Causative Analysis

The school system supports a basal system for teaching reading. Since this is the end of only its second year of use, materials must still be acquired and their costs are exorbitant particularly since the system mandates all aspects of the program including books, skill materials, workbooks, charts, and testing/reporting folders. There is litte money for any other areas or equipment.

Although whole language classrooms were valued and writing had been generally introduced as a five step process, no connections had been made to speech, language, ideas, reading or thematic education. Spirals of understanding and successive approximations of written and spoken language usage, socialization, and cognition of ones' world had all been ignored in order to "cover the text".

Children did learn to read, but many didn't do it well or find much enjoyment. Home support systems were not in place in most cases and absence was high. Yet, 18 of the 27 students in the process writing/whole language/thematic education classroom received perfect attendance awards, had higher test scores than all the other third grades and could allude to readings or alternative knowledge in their writing. They also participated in alternative and extra programs in greater numbers and with greater sustained success.

But.....teachers interviewed indicated they feared the move to process writing, saw no reason to change an existing program and reacted with surprise to the data in the former paragraph. When asked if they would investigate further they stated that it looked interesting, they had enough work already with the new reading program and would be willing to try some aspect in a gradual manner. Thus, teachers were reluctant to initiate change and the system was not encouraging or mandating it.

Specifically, in regard to causative factors the purpose of the childrens' writing was not clear and therefore little care for its quality existed. There was not enough time, choice, or response in the form of publication for an audience opportunities to let children experience ownership and pride. But most important of all, strategies employed did not emphasize transition of language from

speech to print and the orderly, on-going collection of diverse vocabulary for writing.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

Review of the literature gave evidence of the importance of a systematic, orderly approach to the collection of diverse vocabulary in order to extend and diversify childrens' process writing experiences. The literature also emphasized the overall interdependence of speech, play, drama, storytelling transitional expression, and the reading /writing connection to the total literacy experience.

Graves (1981,1984), Bissex (1984), Goodman (1986), Bean and Bouffler (1987), and Harste, Woodward and Burke (1984) declared that the many processes which made up the writing process were not components of the former but rather, each was a series with its own sequences, levels and challenges. Graves further stated that we had put children on a welfare cycle from which we must release them.

Each component of the writing process was itself a process according to Graves (1984), indicating that word choice and spelling have much to do with the development of the child, the child's actual performance level and the challenges within the child's writing environment.

Likewise, attitudes and behavior taught more than explicit instruction, Bissex (1984), since children were imitating and experimenting constantly and needed audience

and display. She additionally claimed that parents and other adults doubted the power of young learners and felt they needed minute instruction when it came to writing and reading.

Goodman (1986) cited learners as active seekers after order which was directly oppositional to highly sequenced mastery learning programs and subskill approaches. As they learned they developed and invented rules which lead toward standard approximations; they were directly involved in standardization. Goodman (1986) additionally noted that children could only control the forms of language when they were dealing with real language, in real situations, with real purposes.

In 1987, Bean and Bouffler concurred when they stated that word choice and spelling were systems to record or reconstruct meaning. Thus, communities determined standards and context and could change them when necessary.

Since risk taking was central to cognitive processing and an integral part of language and learning Harste, Woodward and Burke (1984) note its ever changing character.

Examining the fact that children who entered first grade reading well usually had extensive vocabularies and good retention, Bonds and Bonds (1983) noted that planned programs in word recognition and comprehension with differentiated methods were a necessity. Lomax (1987) pointed out that children in tested theoretical models of the development of print concepts and word reading expanded

their knowledge with age and exposure. This indicated the need for early experience and continued exposure. Indicating that language disabled children revealed specific problems with naming rather than any general vocabulary deficit, Rubin (1983) found their most frequent type of error was one of substitution. Again, early experience and continued exposure were indicated.

Dombey (1986) noted the initiative and explicitness of conversationl word choice and the child's movement towards an external model for the internal conversation with an author or with herself as author. In the conversation children needed an unforced, enjoyable atmosphere where harmony was the overriding feeling. Simulataneously, Schickedanz (1986) described the connection between oral and written language and the recognition of literacy behavior in its early nonconventional stages . Supporting writing development, beginning efforts and using play activities were indicated as relevant actions.

The characteristics of young children's written compositions that might be used to indicate growth patterns were pointed out by Osburn and McDonnell (1983) and four growth strands were identified: (1) readiness, in which the children learned that language could convey a message; (2) sentence, in which children began to string words together to form sentences; (3) describing something; and (4) beginning discourse, in which five elements showed up. Since errors were so important to the growth of the writer,

the classroom atmosphere had to be one that encouraged experimentation.

Children could independently learn to write by writing declared Hurst (1983) if they were immersed in the appropriate social and psychological setting where the child's development and the stage of writing development could be coordinated with the help of the teacher interaction. Haussler (1982) described reading as a written language process that was learned naturally in much the same way as oral language. A model of transitions indicated that children first learned that print was meaningful, next they tried to discover its meaning, and then they invented recognition, prediction and confirmation. Thus, understanding children's varying print awareness was essential to effective reading and writing instruction.

In analyzing the process involved in acquiring word knowledge from written context, Ellern, et al (1988) concluded that children learned lexicogrammatical information incidentally through exposure to written context. Thus all children should have exposure on a regular basis to good books.

Describing the approximately 88,500 words in printed school English, Nagy and Anderson (1984) concluded that even a systematic direct vocabulary instruction model could not account for a significant proportion of all the words children had to learn. Starting here was at least logical.

Additionally, Ice (1986) pointed out that children in their storytelling differentiated between receptive and expressive language and that the distinction between oral and written language may be superfluous.

Christenson (1983) made note of the fact that having fun with language engendered a love of it and an understanding of its power and vitality. Students having this respectful fun were more likely to be more successful writers and indeed, readers of language. Indicating that conversations, storytelling and socialization skills and behaviors all created a natural path to fostering language development whether it was written or oral, Kantor (1989), Jennings (1990), Coster (1989), Little-Soldier-Lee (1989), St. Peters (1989) and Swinson (1988) also emphasized the enjoyment of language.

Marsh (1988) described the hierarchical structure of a multi-faceted academic self-concept. Its relation to academic achievement was particularly true for language development.

Exposure to dramatic play resulted in specific improvement in areas such as vocabulary, imagery abilities and dramatic behavior according to Rosenberg (1989) and Levy (1986) thus indicating a functional relationship existed between sociodramatic play and language performance. Washburn (1983) concurred saying that storytelling and drama encouraged children to listen to the patterns of

language and the variety of vocabulary and was invaluable for retelling.

Pretend play and language growth were associated with but also assisted oral and written communication stated Yawkey (1983) and that real language, actual vocabulary and speech patterns developed children's beginning skills. Playing with, experimenting, writing and speaking the entire range of language was a neecessity.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

The following goals and objectives were projected for this practicum. The goal of the writer was that children in this third grade class learn three specific ways to collect personally unique distinctive vocabulary in order that they become independent of programs and teachers for interesting word choices/vocabulary/spelling usage in their writing. Specific objectives included introducing brainstorming as a prewriting tool in order that collection of topical words and ideas be facilitated, beginning a computer bank in order to provide a fun-filled easily accessible word storage component for writing/spelling referral purposes, and writing and publishing individual thesauri thus enhancing a variety of word choices while delineating more exact meanings to create word pictures.

During the three month implementation period these children were introduced to the full range of process writing. Like all authors of any age they experienced the joy, fun, excitement, dismay and downright discouragement which accompanies something so personal that even in joy it is often scary. And for many of them, it was a great act of trust to be set on their own to learn what they could do.

The writer expected that like many in the past, the situation of freedom of choice, time to write and a kind, respectful audience or reader provided the type of encouragement which facilitated their writing instruction and their whole experience with language and the written word. This writer also expected that the three specific objectives helped them in their word choices, gave their written pieces diversity, and allowed each child to view the process as at least manageable. For some, it might even have been a delight!

Performance Objectives

The following five objectives were designed for this practicum:

Objective 1: Prior to beginning a piece of writing, all third grade students in the practicum class would be able to use three to five words of distinction (new, interesting, unknown, provocative, unique or special sounding) appropriately on a bubble/webbed brainstorm form.

Objective 2: All third grade children in the practicum class would save four to eight "words of distinction" (new, interesting, unknown, provocative or special-sounding) on their computer disks during each week.

Objective 3: All third grade children in the practicum class would write using three to six "words of distinction" in each finished piece.

Objective 4: All third grade children in the practicum class would produce one page of their own thesaurus with three to five specific words per week.

Objective 5: When given three nouns and three adjectives of the teacher's choice to free associate, third graders in the practicum class would double the mean number of responses in a five minute period from that noted in the baseline measure.

Measurement of Objectives

Objective 1 was measured by means of a checklist of bubble-webbed brainstorm forms which tabulated the number of words of distinction, and their appropriate use for the topic. This data was taken prior to writing beginning for each new piece and desired behavior was demonstrated when four such words were listed. Brainstorm forms enabled children to organize groups of vocabulary collections and served as both a permanent and ever-growing collection instrument.

Objective 2 was measured by a computer generated printout of words saved by children in their individual computer banks. Desired behavior was demonstrated when a child saved at least four words in a week and his list grew over the three month period accordingly. Computer bank printouts served to illustrate direct results of collection efforts, growing competency with vocabulary collection and proficiency with a new tool, the computer.

Objective 3 was measured by the identification of at least three words of distinction in a finished piece. Desired behavior was demonstrated through an interview with the author where the author identified the words and could free speak his acquisition process. The interview gave all of the participants a chance to describe their choices, identify their personal interests and use their "author's voice".

Objective 4 was measured by the individual publication of thesaurus pages on a weekly basis. Desired behavior was demonstrated when a collection of five pages were complete. Publication of the thesaurus pages and the resulting collection gave each participant the chance to celebrate a finished product and an accomplishment in an area where success had not been noticeable in the past.

Objective 5 was measured by means of a comparison checklist of pre mean responses to preselected nouns and adjectives and post mean responses to similar nouns and adjectives. Evidence of desired behavior was a doubling of the original mean responses. Although growth was exhibited in most cases using the comparison checklists, it was not viewed in this instance in any positive form by the participants. This experience looked like a typical vocabulary test approach to the children.

Mechanism for Recording Unexpected Results

A buddy journal was kept by the writer and the facilitator during the three month implementation period in

order to facilitate instructional strategy, develop interventions and record events not anticipated. It also included a record of meetings between the writer and the facilitator and the writer and the class.

Description of Plans for Analyzing Results

Results of this three month practicum were analyzed using checklists, computer bank lists, individual written pieces and the buddy journal of the writer and the facilitator. Ultimately it is not the number of new words found or used but whether words have given rise to ideas and understandings. Can children express themselves in a meaningful way and find meaning in others' written expression? Anecdotal records kept by both teachers independently were compared in order to determine whether the objectives individually and for the class as a whole were achieved. Both the facilitating teacher and this writer appreciate the information gathered using the checklists, computer bank printouts and the publication as being necessary first steps in investigating the developing process in using the vocabulary expansion model of this practicum. They are the bare bones upon which the model must rely for sturdy support. But it is important to note that the buddy journal, the interview and and anecdotes kept by the teachers together, singly and with the children which provided the information as to who was fitting it all together, who could now express their ideas more clearly, who had gained understanding and who could integrate the

pieces to form a whole provided the best information. The numerical evaluation tools gave the writer an indication of growth but not operational whole.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Possible Solutions

The written vocabulary of many third grade students was limited almost exclusively to high frequency words. Teacher polls indicated that children did not seem to have many alternatives when it came to word selection. Basic skill tests confirmed this and a perusal of the writing/reading programs in place indicated little or no staff development and few teacher strategies to remedy this problem.

Although much of the recent research had indicated a movement towards a "whole language" approach this in itself was not a program and could not be used as such. Goodman (1986) and Smith (1985) stated that the elimination of the basal text as the sole means of teaching reading did much to encourage teachers to put the whole language/whole learning philosophy into action.

Likewise, Graves (1984) and Karnowski (1988) opted for the combination of Language Experience and process writing being used with the entire class. This gave children an imbedded programmatic experience which encouraged choice, time and response. It also connected the reading, writing, listening and speaking strategies one to another.

A possible "strand" theory had children moving through the grades involved in a program philosophically

complementary. Thus, in-coming kindergarten children were placed in successive years with those teachers who used process writing and invented spelling as mainstays of their programs. Assignment of children was from both a supportive or expansive frame as viewed as a developmentally appropriate placement according to Dimidjian (1989).

Involving grades one to five in a family grouping large room assignment introduced stability and curbed yearly movement and the necessity to meet approximately six to ten new teachers each year. Peer support and cross age tutoring was a real gain according to McGarry (1986), Nielson (1989), Wingart and Kantrowitz (1989).

Developing interlocking themes according to Brountas (1989) to provide real rich active vocabulary backed with cross-age field trips and/or in-school experiences did much to help children expand their "active" and "passive" vocabulary at an alarming rate. And, topic choices profited by this combination.

It is important, just at this point before one turns to the practical applications of introducing a program to expand vocabulary, to make again the statement that denotes the writer's philosophy concerning words in general. Words are vehicles for ideas. They are the medium of sharing, exchanging, participating, developing and describing all aspects of ones humanity. They can and should have a "domino effect" bringing enrichment of ones everyday exchanges, depth to ones ideas and generation to ones

thoughts and actions. They are the medium for participation in the writing process.

Specific ideas to encourage children to diversify their vocabulary, to become writers and to participate in an ever-ongoing reading/writing workshop might included some of the following:

Pretending on an accepted basis can best be described by Vygotsky (1967). He saw imaginative play as a social activity in the sense that it is a form of communication using language, gestures and symbolic objects.

Segal and Adcock (1981) stated that imagintive play is not always involved in imitation; but rather, often takes the form of acting out a plot. This is certainly a necessary ingredient in the child's understanding of cause and effect.

According to Kantor (1989), Jennings (1990) and Swinson (1988) conversations at circle time, stories for thinking and specific reading for language encouragement should be in place on a daily basis for all children. For this reason, a large stuffed animal named Rocky Raccoon was the center of another phase of language exchange. Daily one child taped the happenings in the schoolyard or lunchroom. Simultaneously, other children wrote "Dear Rocky" notes which could be answered by older children in a family grouping setting.

Wordy caterpillars with a new theme every two weeks would add a surprise to what was deadly homework

assignments. "How long can yours grow?","Can you use only three syllable words?" "..or five letter words?" "Does your Mom know any more?"

Description and Justification for Solution Selected

Evaluation of the described solutions reported in the literature indicated that teachers should incorporate dramatic play, use whole language along with the basal and have placement dependent upon philosophy. Programs rich in themes, field trips and cross age groupings should be implemented.

Of course, all children had writing folders with their drafts, completions, published works and collections for writing. During reading workshop and again during writing process time reading, writing, editing, conferencing, sharing, taping and illustrating happened. Reading began the day, was part of writing process, broke the afternoon and closed the day. Writing for ones' piece, notes, diaries, mailbox and class was supported.

Brainstorming for topics, for characters or for specific pieces was taught as an efficient means of collection. Gaicobbe, (1985) suggests brainstorming be utilized because it appealed to the collecting instincts of the age and the ease with which it facilitated generation of starting points for beginning writing.

Using a computer bank to save words, to build a repertoiire and to have fun and become a computer composer was introduced and expertise developed. The computer bank was chosen because of its novelty for beginning third graders and it was interesting and exciting to have an information disk of your own. Culp (1986) states that it also introduced a beginning measure of technology much needed in later editing development procedures and a certain control over the physical environment.

Publishing was, of course, the mainstay of the writing project; and so the children published from the start. They intensified one aspect of this publishing by developing individual thesauri in order to further enhance the word choices for all of their writing.According to Graves (1984) the actual sharing, illustrating and publishing was important affirmation of the childrens' work and efforts. It was also less threatening than the third grade version of the dictionary currently in use. According to Smith (1985), and Cuisinaire (1989) successive approximations from the known to the unknown gives children the courage to try a variety of experiences .

And then the class moved to celebration.....

Author/Autores, a Publishing Party would bring together and display for the writer, the class and the family the results. Happening in-house every six weeks and as a culminating activity in the spring, the children

displayed, audio taped, video taped and sent to the local paper and national writing project site their work. They often included their drafts, knowing full well how much development and sheer work got the writer to this point. And then the writers became readers again !

Recursion! Recursion! Recursion!

The writer believes that all of the solutions offered in the literature can be implemented in the writers work setting. These solutions can improve childrens' vocabulary acquisition while their attitudes towards reading and writing grow and develop.

Report of Action Taken

The solution implementation strategy for this practicum began after receiving approval in October, 1990. Certain procedures were determined prior to the implementation of this proposal.

1) The outline in its entirety was shared and discussed with the facilitating teacher and the principal so that there are no misunderstandings.

2) All process writing texts and articles were also shared.

3) Checklists for measurable progress were obtained or drawn up by the teachers involved in order to evaulate the progress and direction of each child's work.

4) Letters went home to the parents introducing writing workshop, invented spelling and the vocabulary expander

model so that parents gave support and had a clearer picture of this program.

5) Supplies for the writing workshop were delivered and set up in the practicum classroom.

6) Lesson plans for the first two weeks were written and discussed so that writing workshop which began with school's opening was delayed.

The following timeline was in place for the period of implementation

The first step of the solution strategy was for the facilitator and writer to meet to ascertain all materials and understandings of the vocabulary expander model. During this time classroom management techniques, room design, the writing corner and plans for meeting were designed and redesigned. The principal interacted in order to determine the facilitating teacher's responsibilities from an evaluation point and her understanding of the movement, actions, and acceptable "good" behavior of children in a writing process classroom.

Introduction Phase

The second step of the solution strategy was to introduce the thesaurus and children learned the difference between generic and specific words through some common examples. Language, art and music lessons were coordinated to illustrate the examples collected by children. The last two days of the week were spent collecting specific words for generic words and vice versa. This included making

puzzles and "I Guessed It" games for sharing in Author"s Circle. During this week children learned to use a bubble web with an identified topic and spokes of personal knowledge. (Appendix A).

Translation Phase

The third step of the solution strategy was to introduce the children to the thesaurus format where they learned to identify the generic word and translate specific words to radiating or descending lines , (Appendix B). Brainstorming for familiar stories and stories of choice was practiced.

Computer Phase

During the fourth week children were taught to operate the computer, handle disks and save their words of distinction. Children were taught how to collect known, unknown , interesting and different words to be added to their word banks. Initial interest was generated using a homework assignment asking for the longest, the funniest, the hardest to spell or a special word from each child's family bank. A "Great Word Hunt" was introduced in order to familiarize children with the simple gathering of words.

Approximation Phase

During week five children engaged in thesaurus building, brainstorming, computer saving and, of course, writing. This was the "get your feet wet" part of the model whereby all the small pieces practiced, learned and understood in isolation were brought together for the first

time and done in concert. Much of the facilitator's time during this week was spent in approval and confidence-building activities and in modeling behavior as a reader and also as a writer. The facilitating teacher and the writer at all possible times did exactly what the children did. They were writers along with the children and shared their pieces and held them for discussion in author's circle in order that being kind to the writer might become a learned action. Demonstrating audience participation questions was an important role for both these adults.

The sixth, seventh and eighth steps of the solution strategy were operational phases where practice, questioning and reaffirmation and testing took place. This was the "time" element of process writing when children know the process and need predictable daily time in order to claim ownership.

Integration Phase

As part of the integration phase, the ninth part of the solution strategy, children were taught to utilize all three elements before, during and after participating in writing process. They began with brainstorming, moved to their personal thesaurus to make additions and deletions and consulted their computer bank before and during writing. Editing for a friend was introduced as another strategy.

Operation Phase II

Using individual thesauri, computer banks and brainstorming webs to develop their writing, children were

now taught to reverse the process when a piece was finished in order to edit their piece and expand their vocabulary. Childrens' writings were published during all phases as an on-going part of the process. This happened from day one so that children functioned as authors from the start and also so that they celebrated their growth as such. A computer program, "The Children's Writing and Publishing Center" was used for this effort. Eventually during the year it is hoped that the children will learn to operate this program and do some of the publishing themselves.

Process writing began on the first day of school with an introduction to the materials and a few basic explanations such as drafts and the need for change, writing workshop and the time involved each day, and the author's circle where each writer can receive response and feedback. Then writing begins.

This year the thesaurus was introduced during this first day explanation. One week later when each child had participated in author's circle , the children were introduced to brainstorming for pre-writing as a mini lesson to the whole class. Collecting interesting words for their thesauri and using brainstorming occupied the class for the next two weeks. On October first the class will began the computer bank introduction after the children had been to general computer class for three weeks. At that time, we officially started to look at the number of words of distinction children were finding and using in their drafts.

In addition to the checklists for measurement, an individual accounting using "The Teachers Grade Book" computer program was attempted in order to analyze the students' responses. Accounting procedures began in October and was used weekly from then on.

Deviations

During the three month implementation, two significant deviations were encountered. One unexpected event was the addition of six computers to the classroom. These machines facilitated the learning strategy itself while making the technology easily accessible. The program for training and operation was pushed ahead but also other responsibilities were added to the schedule. Sometimes having dual roles caused confusion for the children in their reactions to the two different computer based programs.

In addition, the writer had the opportunity to visit the practicum class on a weekly basis in order to introduce additional mini-lessons in processs writing. This provided additional opportunities to model responses to childrens'written pieces.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND DISSEMINATION

RESULTS

The problem that existed in this writers' work setting was that third grade children were unable to use interesting, provocative, new, different and exciting vocabulary in their written pieces. The problem existed because no program existed which systematically exposed children to good vocabulary and they had no way to save words for future use. Specifically they relied on worn out words and were unable to find alternatives for them when they began to write.

The solution to this problem was to use process writing as a vehicle for exploration and establish a vocabulary model which encouraged children to brainstorm their topics. The writer felt that children knew many more vocabulary alternatives from their oral language. An appropriate easily used brainstorming technique would improve the number and diversity of words in a collection and enhance the writers' confidence and control of the topic. This would reduce the writers' risk factor and make topic development more organized.

The goal of using a computer bank to increase the collection of words of distinction provided significant pleasure and confidence in using technology to solve cognition problems. This, in turn, gave rise to definite

pride of accomplishment, namely the visible proof of computer collection and printing. The publication of the individual thesauri was the ultimate event for these authors that their vocabulary growth through systematic collection and usage was operational.

The following specific objectives were designed to achieve these goals. Each objective includes and indicates results obtained through the evaluation plans:

Objective 1: During the three month implementation, the twenty-six children demonstrated complete mastery of the use of the bubble-webbed brainstorm technique prior to beginning each written piece. Children utilized this process so often that it very quickly became an automatic approach to topic development. Later, it was used in other subject areas for the same purposes and with the same excellent results.

Table 1

Childrens' Use of Bubble-webbed Brainstorm Forms

Total Number of Children - 26

	Mastery	Percentage
Ability to use Brainstorm Form	26	100%

Objective 2: During the three month implementation twenty-four children demonstrated the ability to find, enter, save, and print their words of distinction using an

Apple IIc computer. Two children never did participate in this phase.

Table 2

Computer Bank Word Collection

Total Number of Children - 24				
			Mastery	Percentage
Using the Computer Bank			20	83 %
Range of Words Collected				
	14-30	31-60	61-90	91-114
Number of Children:	1	4	10	9

Objective 3 : During the implementation, the 26 children were able to demonstrate that each of their finished pieces contained at least three to six words of distinction.

Table 3

Using 3-6 Distinctive Words in Each Piece

Total Number of Children -26		
	Mastery	Percentage
Word Usage	26	100%

Anecdotal notes were important to understand the kind and choice of each word and allow the author to explain personal ideas.

Objective 4: During the three month implementation, the children each produced one page of their own thesaurus with three to five specific words per week. Because this experience met with overwhelming success, each child went on to finish a complete hard-covered published version of their individual thesauri. These books will be displayed at the city-wide writing conference in April.

Table 4

Individual Thesauri

Total Number of Children - 26

	Mastery	Percentage
Book Production	26	100%

Objective 5: During the three months of implementation most children were able to double the mean number of responses in a five minute period from the baseline measure when given three nouns and three adjectives.

Table 5

Nouns and Adjectives

Total Number of Children - 26		
	Mastery	Percentage
Double the Baseline Measure	24	92.3%

Discussion

Reviewing the data produced indicates that all of the objectives were achieved in this practicum. This shows that the goals of improving the use of vocabulary in third graders' written pieces were achieved and hopefully will continue to be achieved through the remainder of this school year as they continue using the model.

The results confirm the writers' expectations that teachers could use a process writing approach and teach brainstorming techniques, use of a computer bank for collection purposes and the writing and publishing of individual thesauri to third graders in order to develop new and different vocabulary in their written pieces. Based on the results tabulated, all objectives were achieved.

A review of the literature revealed that others had similar positive results utilizing these strategies. Using writing process, Graves (1983) trained children in an orderly approach to the reading/writing connections,

including the collection of vocabulary. Goodman (1986) produced similar results using whole language philosophy which emphasized using language in all forms across the curriculum. Similarly, long-term positive results were also achieved.

Implications of meeting all the goals and objectives now become worthy of note. Children and teachers are aware of the strength of using this vocabulary expander model to facilitate orderly collection of vocabulary to use in writing. Processs writing, using brainstorming, computer bank and individual thesauri publication enabled children to become writers who could use interesting provocative vocabulary on an everyday basis.

Specifically, they are able to choose topics, brainstorm for development, collect and save vocabulary alternatives and write and publish pieces which are interesting to both the writer and a reader. Most importantly, an organized approach resulting in positive growth and accomplishment is in place and has had both cognitive and attitudinal success. Children write and want to write often. The writer expected that the success factor would have this result. Tkacik (1991) found the following:

> The children just can't be shut off. They want their full time. They don't ever want to give up writing time. They seem always to have things to say because they are choosing their own topics and it seems no trouble at all to really have to search for special

> words if you yourself really need them to make yourself understood. I guess its a lot like doing your own real experiment in science. And its catchy, it keeps growing.

One unanticipated result was the enthusiasm of the facilitating teacher for the program and her enthusiastic sharing of it with other teachers. This, in turn, has led to modified versions of the practicum being tried in three other classes. According to Tkacik (1991):

> I can't believe how much easier it is on me to throw out the red pencil and be a writer with them. They criticize me too and its made me stop and look at my own word choices. Could I be growing a new set of teaching skills? I need to know more about this.

Based on the results obtained from the practicum, the writer concludes that children using a vocabulary expander model with process writing are knowledgable and able to use brainstorming, a computer bank and a thesaurus in order to facilitate personal writing. The writer believes these children are more able to write using provocative vocabulary of their own choice and to publish and illustrate them in an exciting manner.

"Twenty published pieces and we haven't begun all we want to write! Tkacik, (1991)."

Recommendations

1. It is recommended that a strong writing process approach be used to support daily writing.

2. It is recommended that the program begin in September and be a full year long.

3. It is recommended that publishing parties be held monthly

4. It is recommended that all teachers receive in-service education in process writing.

Dissemination

This practicum has been shared informally with four additional teachers.

The writer has been asked to share this practicum with a graduate course offered by the Boston Writing Project at the University of Massachusetts at Boston.

The writer plans to submit an article in regard to this practicum to an appropriate journal.

The writer has submitted a teaching exchange model of this practicum to the Teachers' Network Exchange at the graduate school of education at Harvard University for either publication in their newsletter or a fall Monday-meeting day program.

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APPENDIX A

BUBBLE WEB FOR BRAINSTORMING

Specific Words

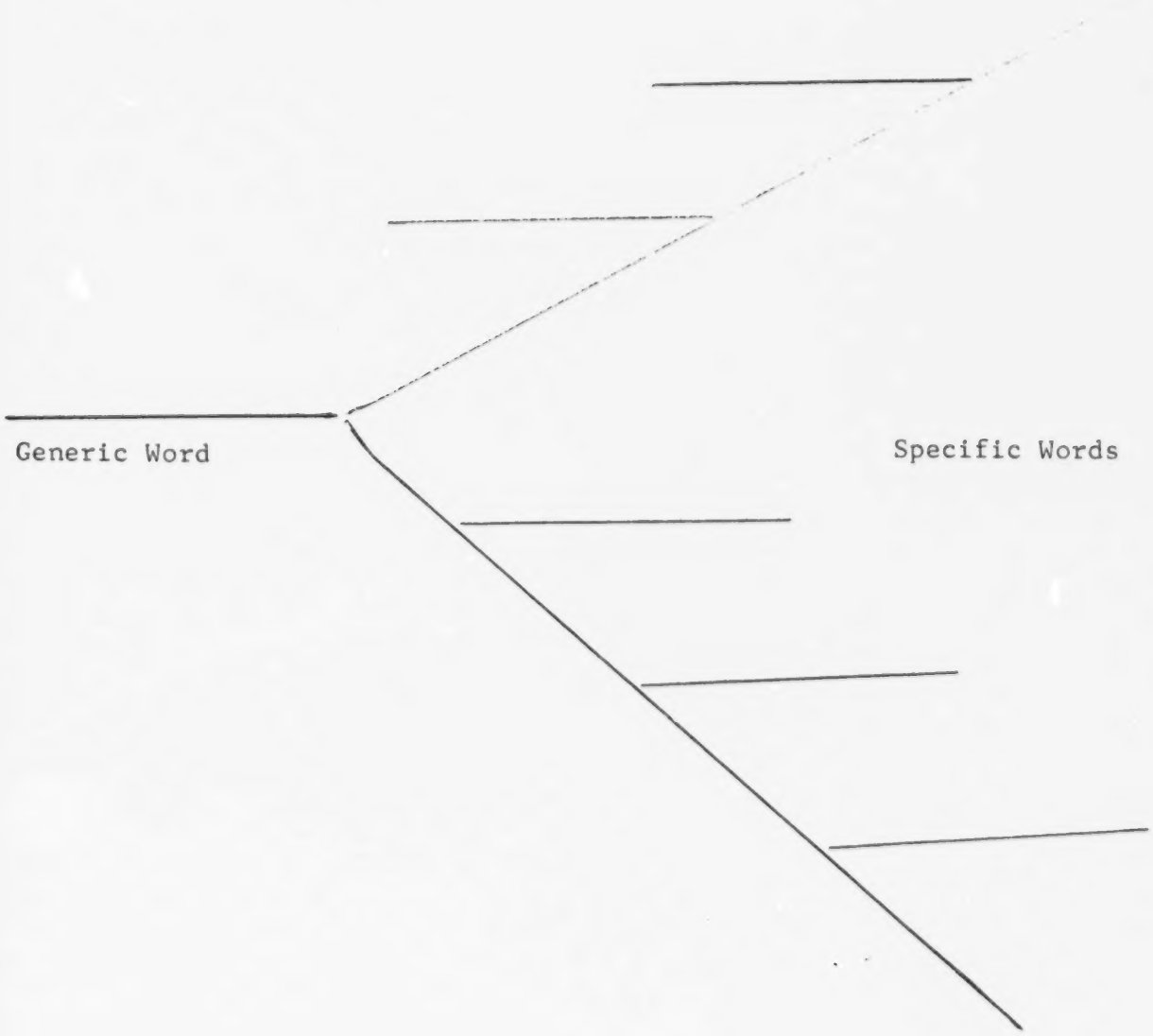
Generic Word

Bubble Web for Brainstorming

50

APPENDIX B

THESAURUS FORMAT


Generic Word
Specific Words